

*Congress must reauthorize SCHIP, the State Health Insurance Program*

For Immediate Release

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March 23, 2007

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(Washington, D.C.) - To create awareness for the need to fund SCHIP, the State Health Insurance Program that benefits 6 million children across the nation, Congressman Albio Sires has joined forces with his colleagues in the House of Representatives to promote "Cover the Uninsured" week. The yearly event is sponsored by a broad coalition of groups including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AARP, several labor organizations among others that understand that our children need to continue to benefit from the health insurance provided by the state.

"In New Jersey, over a quarter of a million children do not have health insurance," said Congressman Sires. "Children who have health insurance are better prepared to learn in school and face life's challenges, which are why our focus is to expand health coverage."

The State Children's Health Insurance Program - or "SCHIP" -- was established by Congress in 1997 to expand health care coverage for children. It provides matching funds to states to help them provide health care coverage for children living in families that are earning too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance.

This year Congress will be reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program for another five years. However, the President's budget significantly underfunds SCHIP, not even providing funding to maintain coverage for those children already enrolled. More than one million children would lose coverage under the President's budget.

"I will work to support SCHIP in New Jersey and around the country by ensuring that it continues to be fully funded," said Congressman Sires. "We must do our best to ensure they lead healthy lives and to take the strain out of their families' budget."